Dear Jim, Bill Buckley to the Rescue 5/12/74

Buckley had another show cancelled to air this one.

He referred to the 2d of May as thought it had not yet come, which may be a mere slip or may mean the show was taped before the publicity on it appeared. But with a panel of Milwaukee reporters this seems unlikely, so maybe my recollection of when I saw the stories is wrong.

I found it fascinating. Hope you have time for your impressions if you saw it.

I am writing for a transcript. But because if it is late coming and I can put myself toegther fast enough I may be writing about it before the transcript gets here, I made notes, meaning I saw less.

The apparent reason seems to be a hangup on the use of the word "blackmail" in the Nixon transcripts. This, if true, among other things would mean that the show could not have been scheduled before almost the minute it was taped.

But in defense of Hunt it was a weak attack on the use of that word. What was interesting is Hunt's view of being owed what would have been his due as a spook.

Some seemingly reasonable things lacked credibility, like it was all coming out before the grand jury anyway. It wasn't and it didn't.

The evasiveness also interested. At one point, where he may have been evasive, I am unclear. Had to do with Hunt's claim not to have known of the Chilean break-in. It is unclear to me whether he meant what Buckley was talking about or the job itself and if the latter, if only before. They spoke of it as what it was, a reality, so at some point both did known. And this was the only job mentioned besides Fielding and both DNC's.

Hunt seems much older and paler. He took deep breaths often before answering. Grim, solemn, and somewhat angry. Took a drink of water before he spoke first word.

Surprizing lack of criticism of anyone, even Dean, who used the word he hated.

Dean merely didn't understand.

Refusal, virtually, to say anything at all critical of Nixon.

Once said Haldeman about dirtyworks when he should have meant Ejrlichman. Slip?

B. opened by describing them as friends for 23 years, being thrice Hunt godfather, Dorothy's executor, but no ref to having been in CIA with Hunt. Meaning from 1951.

The Road to the Watergate is Hunt's 43rd, so the count is set. And does the content account for the evasiveness of the show, not to blow it?

Glib in spots. Like Hunt so desparate for money when he had gotten $250,000.

Glib on how he got Bittman, too. Or retainer of $26,000, an odd sum.

And on how Bittman put in all the time to justify the fee never mentioned. Only debt.

This also leaves unexplained how if Hunt needed $120,000, of which $60,000 was for Bittman, Bittman got only that LaRue envelope of $75,000 the nightof the WH discussion and turned it unopened over to Hunt, whose later testimony is that he put it in a safe box and paid Bittman from fund from the insurance settlement. There has to be more, either in the form of other funds by other means or of discussion in which Hunt agreed to less.

Can it be that a hangup on being called a blackmailer alone accounts for this nothing show? Did Buckley get as upset over this as Hunt? Was it no more than a favor to a friend, with a Hunt appearance enough for a nothing show? (There are things in it for those with interest and knowledge, if not too much, but I mean for the general audience nothing.)

I'm having the usual trouble with my writing, but one quote from toward the end fascinates, "What I know is that the CIA did not come forth with its unvouchered funds." He knows no such thing. And right before this, asked about the sources he answered in terms of "control" of the money. Hastily,